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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH ANNOTATIONS

- * Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
- R Recommended.
- Ad Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
- M Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
- NR Not recommended.
- SpC Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
- SpR A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.
- C.U. Curricular Use.
- C.V. Developmental Values

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Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

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Volume 41

APRIL, 1988

Number 8

New Titles for Children and Young People

Aaseng, Nathan *The Disease Fighters: The Nobel Prize in Medicine*. ISBN 0-8225-0652-1. *The Inventors: Nobel Prizes in Chemistry, Physics and Medicine*. ISBN 0-8225-0651-3. *The Peace Seekers: The Nobel Peace Prize*. ISBN 0-8225-0654-8. All three books Lerner, 1987. 72p. illus. with photographs. (Nobel Prize Winners). \$9.95.

Ad *Gr. 5-7.* In a series of books that give interesting information about men and women whose signal contributions have been recognized by their winning of a Nobel Prize, the subtitles may be doubling misleading: first, there is no attempt to include—or even to list—all winners in the category the book covers, and second, some of the material in each book, while relevant, is not about the winners of Nobel prizes. In each volume, Aaseng gives background history and discusses the work of eight or nine Nobel Prize winners (not always chronologically arranged) in adequate style, not too dry, not too exclamatory. Photographs (there are many) are of variable pertinence; each volume has an index and a glossary. ZS

Adler, Carole S. *Always and Forever Friends*. Clarion, 1988. ISBN 0-89919-681-0. 164p. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. 5-7.* Sixth grade seems empty to Wendy after her best friend moves to Thailand and she maneuvers to join a popular group and avoid the class outcasts. The relationship she builds with Honor, a studious black girl who is fiercely protective of her privacy, and Jeremy, a goodhearted but hyperactive boy, makes her realize that friendships are built through trust and flexibility rather than similarity. This is centered on a problem of immediate concern to young readers, and the dynamics and dialogue are natural. At a few points, the plot seems engineered to suit the theme, which is complicated by a subplot involving Wendy's adjustment to a new step-family (her mother's husband and his three children). The protagonist, however, is refreshingly "average" in her reactions and capacities, and the issue of race relations is incorporated with honesty and aplomb. BH

D.V. Friendship values; Intercultural understanding

Alexander, Martha. *Even That Moose Won't Listen to Me*; written and illus. by Martha Alexander. Dial, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-0188-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-0187-X. Library ed. \$9.89; Trade ed. \$9.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R *Gr. K-2.* Softly colored, neatly executed line and wash pictures in Alexander's distinctively low-keyed style illustrate a story in the *Nobody Listens*

to Andrew tradition. As a moose calmly munches his way through the family vegetable garden, Rebecca's urgent pleas for intervention are dismissed by each member of her family; even the moose, when she tries to frighten him off, ignores Rebecca. When, too late, the others see the destruction in the garden and ask Rebecca what in the world happened, she answers "I'm busy now," and promises to tell them when she finishes building her toy rocket ship. Not a new idea, but an attractive development of the concept, amusing, but—because of Rebecca's calm—not quite convincing. ZS

Aylesworth, Jim. *Hanna's Hog*; illus. by Glen Rounds. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31367-5. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R 5-7 yrs. Aylesworth and Rounds have teamed up before (*Hush Up, Shenandoah Noah*), and the folksy effect is predictably humorous. Here, an old woman named Hanna plots to get her pig back from a neighbor who's stolen it. He blames a bear, so Hanna waits till he goes to the outhouse, rakes the wall with claw-like marks and grabs the pig, leaving plenty of ursine clues behind. Conviction by suggestion—case closed. Characteristically, Rounds' figures are simply composed, black-outlined mountaineers posturing against plenty of white space. Hounds, chickens, and cats are the only litter, and they're occasional. The star of the show, Hanna's Hog, is a ludicrous beast whose mustard color matches the faces of the two main characters. Tellable without pictures, this will serve as a good picture-book read-aloud as well. BH

Bergman, Tamar. *The Boy From Over There*; tr. from the Hebrew by Hillel Halkin. Houghton, 1988. ISBN 0-395-43077-1. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R Gr. 5-8. Beginning with the arrival of an orphaned Jewish refugee at the end of World War II, this details his absorption into a Galilee kibbutz until the children's evacuation in the war of 1948. The dynamics among the characters are realistically developed, including one boy's resentment of the allowances made for the newcomer, another's sensitive alliance, and the role played by a dog in bringing the children together. By the end of the book, the protagonist has accepted the loss of his mother, whom he had hoped was still alive, as his best friend has accepted the loss of her father on the European front. There are some touching scenes, as when another refugee relives her bitter past with the evacuation truck's "taking away" her daughter. The focus of the novel, however, is on new lives. While we've had many novels about children's experiences in the Holocaust, this is one of the few and the best on a survivor's adjustment in Israel. There are occasional cases of stylistic awkwardness, but in general the translation is smooth and the dialogue natural. BH

C.U. History—World War II, 1939-1945

D.V. Death, adjustment to

Boutis, Victoria. *Looking Out*. Four Winds, 1988. ISBN 0-02-711830-4. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- Ad Gr. 6-9. It's 1953, and 12-year-old Ellen wants to be "an ordinary American girl," just like her new best friend Judy, who prizes chewing gum, wearing makeup, "anything purple," dirty jokes and circle skirts. Hard as she tries, though, Ellen cannot escape the un-ordinary secret she hides so desperately: her parents are communists, "reds," says Ellen, afraid the smallest slip could send her

parents to jail like the Rosenbergs, or on the run like the comrades her family hides. Her biggest fear, and resentment as well, is that her parents love “the cause” more than they do her. They’re all real fears—especially well drawn are Ellen’s parents’ fierce dedication to their beliefs and naive blindness to their own daughters’ needs. This does stack the deck a bit against “ordinary” Americans, all of whom are depicted as leading shallow and meaningless lives, and the ending (Ellen decides no longer to “duck-and-cover” during air-raid drills) seems forced, substituting 80’s rhetoric for a real conclusion. However, there’s little else on this period for junior high readers, who, regardless of their political persuasions, may identify with this story of a girl who struggles into maturation while her parents’ attentions lie elsewhere. RS

C.U. U.S. History—Modern—Stories
D.V. Individuality, expressing

Buscaglia, Leo. *A Memory for Tino*; illus. by Carol Newsom. SLACK/Morrow, Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07483-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07482-0. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

NR *Gr. 3-5.* “You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.” That little epigraph by Kahlil Gibran introduces this equally banal fable of Tino, a good-hearted little boy who gives away his family’s TV set to Mrs. Sunday, the lonely old lady who lives on the hill. At first unaccountably disturbed by this action, Tino’s parents soon realize the magnitude of the gift their son has given, not just to Mrs. Sunday, but to themselves. As his mother says, “Tino is just a child, and yet he’s wiser than we are”—to which Tino’s father (quite refreshingly) replies, “You mean you think we should let her keep the set?” Well, yes, for the TV is a gift of love, or, as Mr. Buscaglia more often has it, “feeling good.” And Tino gets something just as important in return: “a memory of happiness.” This is the sort of nonsense that writers for adults too often think they can get away with during their occasional forays into children’s books: patronizing, didactic, and dull. The illustrations are trite and awkwardly drafted. RS

D.V. Generosity; Older-younger generations

Byars, Betsy C. *The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown*. Viking, 1988. ISBN 0-670-81932-8. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* *Gr. 5-8.* With her particular talent for rendering sad situations from a good-humored protagonist’s perspective, Byars has written a very funny book about the first love between two classmates whose teacher is desperately lovelorn over an aerobics instructor. While Bingo’s girlfriend, Melissa, returns his affection, Mr. Markham is driven to a suicide attempt by rejection. There are many points to admire here. One is the high-spirited reflection of classroom conversations and dynamics, which Bingo observes during his perpetual journeys to the pencil sharpener. A second is the smooth blend of plot and subplot, as the reader realizes that it is the child who is normal and the adult who has lost control. However, neither is stereotyped. Bingo grows wiser with the usual spurts and setbacks of pre-adolescent realization. Mr. Markham is a sensitive, witty, intelligent teacher who is unstable and makes a terrible mistake, but who has the affection of his class and who recovers his balance. The honest, capable handling of Bingo’s guilt by his mother, who at first appears to be something of an airhead,

is another coup. There is a range of humor, from hilarious ("He, who had been in love three times in one day and had already had four mixed-sex conversations!") to ironic ("Bingo knew his name would not be picked. He had never been chosen for anything in his life"). Maintained in both style and incident, these passages are too numerous to mention, although some, like the description of Bingo's perfect grandmother, are memorable. This is a story that children are going to get a lot out of and love, while adults appreciate both craft and content. BH

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Teacher-student relations

Clifford, Eth. *Scared Silly*; illus. by George Hughes. Houghton, 1988. ISBN 0-395-46845-0. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 3-5. Sensible Mary Rose Onetree and her excitable sister Jo-Beth are accompanying their father on a trip when he gets sidetracked (as he often does) to the Walk-Your-Way-Around-the-World-Museum. It's a bizarre establishment run by a retired shoe tycoon, along with his brother, nephew, housekeeper, and cook. Several generations of magician/inventors have filled the place with trick rooms and tunnels into which the three travelers keep disappearing. There's a mystery as well (who stole the Chinese emperor's priceless shoes and Egyptian sandals?) which is accidentally solved by the girls before they leave. The pace is frenetic, the events are unlikely, and the two girls are barely saved from stereotype by occasionally assuming characteristics that contradict their personality niches. BH

Cole, Babette. *Prince Cinders*; written and illus. by Babette Cole. Putnam, 1988. ISBN 0-399-21502-6. 29p. \$12.95.

Ad 5-7 yrs. Prince Cinders, victimized by three big hairy brothers who dance at the Palace Disco, is visited by a klutzy fairy with a Star of David wand. After several misbegotten attempts, the prince is transformed into a gorilla, who scares a princess waiting at a bus stop. She believes that the prince who suddenly appears at midnight actually scared away the gorilla. The frightened prince leaves his trousers behind in his rush to get away, but of course he's found by the fit, gets married, and enjoys watching his brothers turned into housework fairies. More slapstick than satire, this will appeal to kids overfed with clichéd Cinderellas, though it doesn't measure up to wittier creations by Jay Williams and others. The watercolor cartoons show the same goofy exaggeration as those in Cole's *Princess Smartypants* (reviewed in the June, 1987 issue). BH

Colman, Hila. *Rich and Famous Like My Mom*. Crown, 1988. ISBN 0-517-56836-5. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 5-7. On the "poor little rich girl" theme, this is a story told by thirteen-year-old Cassandra, whose beautiful mother (father's decamped) is a rock star. Cassandra has everything money can buy—but she's often lonely in her mother's absence, has no friends, and feels smothered by being overprotected. She meets and is fascinated by a tough, independent bag lady, Mollie, and tries to help her and some other street people. Through this she makes a friend, a classmate who goes with her to do volunteer work in a soup kitchen. Later she meets a compatible boy; still later she reveals her new interest to her mother, who promptly gives a benefit concert for the homeless (due to a convenient cancellation, the concert's at Madison Square Garden). This is not badly written,

but it has a patchwork plot, a message about helping the homeless that is obtrusive albeit worthy, and characterization that seems largely type casting. ZS

D.V. Kindness to others

Conford, Ellen. *Poor Jenny Archer*; illus. by Diane Palmisciano. Little, 1988. ISBN 0-316-15262-5. (Springboard Books). \$9.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 2-4. Jenny has a problem: only twenty-seven cents to buy her mother a birthday present. The problem is compounded by the fact that Jenny plans to buy a fur coat so her mother won't feel poor any more. A number of money-earning plans fall through, including dog training, baby sitting, and house selling, each with its built-in incident of disaster-humor. Finally, Jenny settles for buying her mother a lace collar and realizes that not being able to afford something doesn't equal poverty. It's a benevolent story, mildly funny if slightly overextended (Jenny seems old enough to know better than to try and sell her own house for money to buy her mother a birthday present). The transition readers for whom this series is intended (see the Duncan review, below) will be able to empathize and feel superior at the same time. BH

D.V. Value building

Dickinson, Peter. *A Box of Nothing*. Delacorte, 1988. ISBN 0-385-29664-9. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-6. Late for school and therefore trying to avoid his mother on the street, James ducks into an abandoned shop. An old storekeeper gives him a box of ancient, high-quality nothing and then disappears. Because of the box's magical properties, James is drawn into the future-world of a fossilized Dump. His guide through this inferno is a creature called the Burra, which, with its crazy assortment of mismatched parts, represents collective, activated garbage ("We are a democratic institution"). Everything in the Burra and its environment is part of everything else except the rats, a vicious Nazi-like society that patrols the Dump, and the giant, capricious gulls. This is an inventively fantastical world, with a gripping start and an entertaining middle. The end gets obscure with a race between the rats and the Burra to create a new universe, but the action is undeniable and James' escape satisfying if not entirely logical. An imaginative romp through the refuse. BH

Duncan, Lois. *Wonder Kid Meets the Evil Lunch Snatcher*; illus. by Margaret Sanfilippo. Little, 1988. ISBN 0-316-19558-8. (Springboard Books). \$9.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 2-4. His first day in the new school starts out even worse than fourth-grader Brian Johnson expects it to. He and his sister Sarah are jumped by a sixth-grade bully, Matt, whose gang of lunch-grabbers terrorizes the school. Yet that very incident leads the Johnson children to make some new friends, and together they concoct a scheme to convince Matt of the existence of Wonder Kid, zapper of bullies. Unfortunately, they have to produce Wonder Kid in the flesh but, in doing so, discover their own wondrous capacities. This is sprightly wish fulfillment for any kid: a skinny, lonely nerd whose only refuge is the world of comic book

heroes becomes one. The plot has some unlikely moments, but it's fun and all done with stylistic ease and easy-to-read style. BH

D.V. Fear, overcoming

Ellis, Sarah. *A Family Project*. Margaret K. McElderry, 1988. ISBN 0-689-51444-6. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R Gr. 6-8. Eleven-year-old Jessica does a school project in preparation for the coming of her new baby sister, whom she and her two older brothers anticipate and welcome with enthusiasm. Jessica, in fact, has a special touch with baby Lucie, and she is shattered when Lucie is a victim of crib death. This is a story of a family—already changed by the oldest son's departure and stressed by the second son's rebellious adolescence—pulling through a crisis that traumatizes the mother to the point where she can hardly function. Although Jessica's point of view is consistently maintained, each complex character develops in a different way, which makes the novel an ambitious one. There are a few points when the mother's rigidity is perhaps overemphasized (she often talks in capital letters), and the tenant downstairs seems one character too many. In general, however, the cast is subtly portrayed, especially the rebellious brother, and there are some memorable scenes that will touch young readers with a realization of the resilience that is crucial in a loving family. BH

D.V. Death, adjustment to

Ernst, Lisa Campbell. *Nattie Parson's Good Luck Lamb*; written and illus. by Lisa Campbell Ernst. Viking, 1988. ISBN 0-670-81778-3. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- Ad 5-7 yrs. Handsomely composed pictures justify an old-fashioned story about a girl whose weaving saves her favorite sheep, Clover, and her grandfather's hard-pressed farm. Since most of their wool must be sold, Nattie practises weaving on bits she collects and saves. Clover's wool is too coarse to sell, but when hard times threaten, Nattie weaves it into a shawl, incorporating the raspberry stains from Clover's latest feast into a skillful design. The shawl immediately sells to the first customer who sees it, much to the shock of the miserly storekeeper, and the money buys hay for the whole winter. The ending's contrived, as is Clover's capacity to worry and understand his mistress' conversation. However, Nattie's determination and success will satisfy young listeners, and the illustrations' coloration, line work, and crosshatch texturing have a life of their own. BH

D.V. Ingenuity

Esbensen, Barbara Juster, ad. *The Star Maiden: An Ojibway Tale*; illus. by Helen K. Davie. Little, 1988. ISBN 0-316-24951-3. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R 4-7 yrs. A star maiden yearns to leave the sky and come to the rich, peaceful land depicted in this Ojibway tale. Appearing in a dream to a young brave and then following him home (his only role appears to be as guide), she becomes first a rose, then a blue prairie flower, and finally, happily, a water lily. This is a poetically adapted tale, one of many star myths common to Native American lore. Each page of text is faced with a watercolor painting divided into two frames of related scenes and bordered with traditional Indian motifs. The compositions are

consequently complex but carefully coordinated around focal points of attention. A gently appealing tale in a rich visual setting. BH

Fine, Anne. *Alias Madame Doubtfire*. Little, 1988. ISBN 0-316-28313-4. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R* Gr. 5-. Novels about divorce for children are rarely funny; here's one that will have readers laughing from the first page. Lydia, Christopher, and little Natalie have arrived, for their regular Tuesday tea with Dad, carrying yet another letter from Mom ("‘Aha!’ he cried. ‘Another missive from the Poisoned Pen. How is your mother, anyway?’") which, as usual, says she'll have to cut the children's next visit short, and which, also as usual, the children have already opened and read. "It came under their general heading of self-defense." Mom (Miranda) has also decided to employ an after-school housekeeper; in the hope of seeing more of his children, Dad (Daniel), a usually out-of-work actor, manages to get the job—by getting up in drag as the magnificent and sublimely capable dowager Madame Doubtfire. The kids catch on quick and are at first gleeful for Daniel's company and the harmless (they think) deception, but then comes a remarkable scene when Miranda, believing she has a friendly ear, spills all her anger at Daniel to Madame. The children join in, at first playfully, and then with barely disguised malice aim their own darts at the helpless target. While Daniel gets most of the good lines ("‘Fractions are useful,’ Daniel told his son. ‘Nobody ever gets all they want out of life.’") it gradually becomes apparent that this wit is also his weakness, a carelessness that can hurt his children. Miranda, at first seeming a cold career woman, is equally revealed as a mother who works terribly hard at her job and family. This novel is a special combination of high humor and genuine pain (the first often expressing the second), showing, ironically and perfectly, in this "broken home" the bonds of shared history and love that keep a family together. RS

D.V. Divorce, adjustment to; Family relations

Fritz, Jean. *China's Long March: 6,000 Miles of Danger*. Putnam, 1988. ISBN 0-399-21512-3. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R* Gr. 7-. Although the author's intended audience is young people, this account of the long, dogged march of the Chinese Red Army in 1934 and 1935 compares favorably with some of the best adult books on the subject. Because Fritz is adept at gauging her intended audience, and because most of her material is based on interviews with survivors, the writing has an easy flow and an immediacy that make the ordeal vivid and personal. Jean Fritz loves the country where she spent most of her childhood, and her book is a felicitous blend of sympathetic understanding and an objective assessment of historical events. ZS

C.U. History—China; Social Studies

D.V. Courage; Devotion to a cause

Gackenbach, Dick, ad. *Harvey, the Foolish Pig*; retold and illus. by Dick Gackenbach. Clarion, 1988. ISBN 0-89919-540-7. 32p. \$13.95.

- R 4-6 yrs. This "free adaptation of an Armenian folk tale" features a destitute pig who sets out to ask the great King of Animals how to become rich. On the way he meets three other animals who commission him to ask questions for them as well: a wolf asks where to find a good meal; a pretty, rich pig asks

how to become happy; a dry tree asks how to ease its thirst. The King directs the pig to all the answers, but alas, the pig is so greedy and foolish he becomes the wolf's supper. Gackenbach's jovial watercolors in brown, blue, and gold lighten the tone of the precipitous ending in much the way Galdone's did for *The Gingerbread Boy* (though one could have done without naming the unfortunate fortune-seeker "Harvey"). Each of the creatures is caricatured for full dramatic effect, and the action is swift and sure. Though not oversize, the book is spaciouly enough designed to use in small-group read-alouds. BH

Goble, Paul. *Her Seven Brothers*; written and illus. by Paul Goble. Bradbury, 1988. ISBN 0-02-737960-4. 27p. \$13.95.

- R 5-7 yrs. After his foray into historical legend with *The Death of the Iron Horse* (reviewed in the April, 1987, issue), Goble has returned to a Cheyenne myth about the creation of the Big Dipper. The story tells of a girl skilled in embroidering deer and buffalo skin clothes with porcupine quills. In tune with the spirit world and language of the animals, she makes clothes for seven brothers, journeys to their tipi, and happily sets up housekeeping as their sister. When a buffalo chief demands her in marriage and she refuses, the eight young people must escape a vengeful stampede by climbing a tree into the sky, where they become the stars of the Big Dipper. Goble's full-color illustrations are consistent with the style that has shaped his other ten books, showcasing landscape compositions punctuated by Native American motifs and harmonic nature imagery. It is much to his credit that he gives complete references for the story sources from which he adapts the text and that he describes the setting, with a note on artistic techniques used to reflect it. BH

Graham, Thomas. *Mr. Bear's Boat*; written and illus. by Thomas Graham. Dutton, 1988. ISBN 0-525-44375-4. 30p. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R 3-5 yrs. Paintings that are uncluttered and often humorous albeit inelegant are nicely coordinated with a well-paced, simply written story. Mr. Bear builds a small sailboat, and Mrs. Bear awaits its completion with growing anticipation. Comes the summer day when they take off, sails hoisted and picnic basket well filled; battered by a succession of troubles (motor boats, scuba divers, a low-flying airplane, loss of basket, being becalmed) the bears eventually get back to their own beach, where they contentedly picnic. How enthralling for the very young, who love disaster humor! How satisfying and reassuring to have a safe-home happy ending. The audience can "read" the story from the pictures, and even the naivete of the latter seems to fit. ZS

Hahn, Mary Downing. *Following the Mystery Man*. Clarion, 1988. ISBN 0-89919-680-2. 180p. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R Gr. 6-10. Madigan is so enchanted by the handsome stranger who rents a room in her grandmother's house that she fantasizes he's the father she's never known. By the time she lets herself recognize suspicious signs that he's a thief, she's followed him too far—and becomes victim of a kidnapping. This is a novel that scores high on several counts: it's a solid first-person narrative, a tightly plotted thriller, and a vivid character portrayal of the antagonist as well as the protagonist. Clint James has a tangible charisma, and his complexity along with Madigan's vulnerability is clearly realized against the backdrop of a small-town setting. Readers will be waiting in line. BH

D.V. Father-child relations

Henkes, Kevin. *The Zebra Wall*. Greenwillow, 1988. ISBN 0-688-07568-1. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 4-7.* Flopsy? Florinda? Frito? The Vorlob family is compiling a list of F-names for the expected baby, who follows Adine, Bernice, Carla, Dot, and Effie. It's got to be another girl, right? And when the time comes to name Baby (the family awaits inspiration) Mrs. Vorlob decides, one, the name will begin with "Z", and two, her sister, bossy and eccentric Aunt Irene, will get to do the choosing. Ten-year-old Adine hates this idea almost as much as she does Aunt Irene, who has moved in to help out, and for companionship—her husband's run off. While the conflict between Irene and Adine provides central tension, it does not overwhelm the basic new-baby story of a confidently idiosyncratic family. Mrs. Vorlob, "robust and real," is definitely in the running for World's Best Mom. While brooking no objection to her own slightly skewed outlook on life, she is sensitive and understanding of an occasionally embarrassed Adine's desire for a little conformity. Baby *Zachary* is going to have a great time. RS

D.V. Aunt-niece relations; Baby, adjustment to

Hobbs, Will. *Changes in Latitudes*. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31385-3. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- M *Gr. 7-9.* Teenage Travis, the narrator, describes a Mexican vacation with his mother (in a hostile relationship with her husband, who'd refused to come along) and his idealistic little brother Teddy. Teddy is interested in protecting the local turtles, an endangered species; Mom is interested in another man; Travis is interested in females and in himself. Primarily in himself: Hobbs, in this unfortunately overwritten first novel, does succeed in depicting Travis as a lazy, self-centered, and uncooperative boy. Travis' one soft spot is Teddy, but Teddy's death (intracranial hemorrhage, congenital) while on a turtle-rescue mission seems contrived as a way to end the story and to effect a family reunion with Dad, a repentant Mom, and sister Jennifer, who has been part of the Mexican trip but not relevant to the action. There's some interest in the conservation angle and pathos in the death of Teddy, but this is mediocre in style, structure, and characterization. ZS

D.V. Brothers; Death, adjustment to

Jacobs, Paul Samuel. *Born Into Light*. Scholastic, 1988. ISBN 0-590-40710-4. 147p. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R* *Gr. 6-10.* Just before sunrise on a spring morning in 1913, ten-year-old Roger Westwood sees an intense burst of light in the woods near his house, and soon after, a wild naked boy comes running into the yard. Easily tamed by the gentleness of Roger's sister Charlotte, Benjamin (as they name him) becomes a member of the family, astounding them with his quick learning and growth, and his ingenuous kindness. In a war game with the other boys, Benjamin says "I would never hurt your kind." The family soon acquires another child of that morning, Nell, beautiful and strange like Benjamin, but, also like him, easily tired and growing old too quickly. "They will be like meteors, bright and full of light, but quick expiring," says Roger's doctor father, who has some idea of the differentness of Benjamin and Nell. The story of the two and the others like them

is related seventy years later by Roger, whose voice is etched from the beginning with a quiet, measured sadness that allows horror but no sensationalism to intrude on what readers will only gradually realize is a science fantasy story. Like Ray Bradbury but without his nostalgia, Jacobs writes of ordinary people whose lives are changed through contact with ultimately unknowable aliens, distant relations who "one day, sooner than we would like, will all be taken from us." RS

D.V. Interpersonal understanding

Johnston, Ginny. *Scaly Babies: Reptiles Growing Up*; by Ginny Johnston and Judy Cutchins. Morrow, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07306-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07305-0. illus. with photographs. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 3-5. Exceptionally well written and illustrated with striking color photographs, this is also ecologically centered. Environment is inherent to the conceptualization and organization as well as being the emphasis of a concluding summary. In describing each creature's life cycle and characteristics, the authors consider its place in a natural habitat and food chain. The sections on snakes, lizards, crocodilians, and turtles include lively descriptions and immediate detail ("The Gila monster drags the lifeless body under a rock and munches it"). Stereotyped human reactions to reptiles are effectively countered with intriguing graphic and textual information. The bold, potentially distracting book design actually works for smooth coordination of print and pictures; glossary and index are included. BH

C.U. Biology

Johnston, Norma. *The Potter's Wheel*. Morrow, 1988. ISBN 0-688-06463-9. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 7-9. Sixteen-year-old Laura describes her visit with a glamorous, imperious grandmother—the potter whose balance and serenity Laura copies—during a reunion of her mother's extended family. Mother, who's had a conflict with Gran, is in England.) There's a fragmented romance, and a great deal of juggling of family relationships as wealthy Gran organizes festivities to celebrate the restoration of the village in which she owns so much property. Laura gains confidence when she is pushed into taking responsibility and is successful, and this enables her to gain perspective on her feelings about her parents. This is adequately written if overpopulated, uneven in depth of characterization, occasionally weak in the use of awkward phrasing or inappropriate action, yet it has some interest as a family story. ZS

D.V. Family relations; Grandparent-child relations; Self-confidence

Klein, Norma. *Now That I Know*. Bantam, 1988. ISBN 0-553-05472-4. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 6-9. As she did in *Breaking Up*, Klein here looks at the problem of having a homosexual parent, in this case, a father. Nina, thirteen, is a "J.C.K." (joint custody kid) who spends half the week with each parent. Her mother is bitter and lonely; her father somewhat better off, spending a lot of time with best friend Greg. That Dad and Greg are lovers will be sooner apparent to readers than

to Nina, who finds out on her birthday that Greg is moving into her father's apartment. Smoothly, if with little depth, this tells of Nina's fears—of becoming second in her father's heart, of his getting AIDS—and her eventual (and too abrupt) adjustment to the situation. While not sexually explicit, this is familiar Klein mood and milieu—an Upper West Side populated by kids much smarter than their parents. Along the way, Klein tosses out a couple of bits of sexual information so incomplete as to constitute misinformation: friend Dara sees a TV special on teen pregnancy and says "Did you know there's only one day every month someone can get pregnant? Maybe even less. Maybe just twelve hours," and, at another point, Dad tells Nina that she doesn't have to worry about his getting AIDS because he's only slept with Mom and Greg, which fails to take Greg's sexual history into account. RS

D.V. Parent-child relations

Lapenkova, Valentina. *Russian Food and Drink*; by Valentina Lapenkova and Edward Lambton. Bookwright/Watts, ISBN 0-531-18175-8. 45p. illus. with photographs. (Food and Drink). \$11.90.

M Gr. 6-9. On the review slip for this title, in a series first published in England, the publisher states, "A comprehensive, beautifully illustrated test (sic) combining typical Russian recipes with a historical, geographical and personal account of the Russian people and their country." In 48 pages, that's a lot to cover and indeed the coverage is superficial, so that this is neither a satisfactory cookbook nor a satisfactory social studies book. Most of the text is devoted to such topics as dining out, food stores, growing food, meals, and markets. Color photographs, diagrams, and recipes fit into a two-column format. There are some careless errata in the recipes; for example, using butter in a recipe but referring, in an appended safety note, to being careful because "hot oil burns," or parenthetically defining smetana as sour cream on one page, while the glossary explains that smetana "is quite different in flavor and texture from sour cream." The glossary itself seems to have some odd inclusions: "labor camp," for example. A brief bibliography and an index are also provided. ZS

Lester, Helen. *Tacky the Penguin*; illus. by Lynn Munsinger. Houghton, 1988. ISBN 0-395-45536-7. 32p. \$13.95.

R 4-6 yrs. Lester and Munsinger have a way with kooky creatures, witness their collaboration on *The Wizard, the Fairy, and the Magic Chicken*. Tacky is a worthy successor, an "odd bird" who doesn't fill the standard penguin bill. While his tuxedoed companions Goodly, Lovely, Angel, Neatly, and Perfect march 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, flower-shirted Tacky marches 1-2-3, 4-2, 3-6-0, 2 1/2, 0. When his friends dive, Tacky cannonballs. When the hunters come, though (*thump . . . thump . . . thump*), Tacky manages, by his unpenguin-like behavior and raucous singing ("HOW MANY TOES DOES A FISH HAVE?/ AND HOW MANY WINGS ON A COW?") to dissuade them from capturing the whole lot. This is an extended joke, but nonetheless effective. The full-color cartoon drawings, vaguely reminiscent of Wallace Tripp's, are funny in detail and expression; the theme is one that will appeal to any wayward young listener. BH

D.V. Individuality, expressing

Linn, Margot. *A Trip to the Doctor*; illus. by Catherine Siracusa. Harper, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-025843-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-025839-X. Library ed. \$10.89; Trade ed. \$9.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad 2-4 yrs. A book designed to inform (and probably to reassure) very young children about the procedures used during a routine medical examination is lightened but little improved by making a guessing game out of each procedure. Example: "Who is going to check Joey's mouth and throat? The doctor. What will he use? See if you can guess." Shown: an ice cream cone, a teddy bear, a tongue depressor, and a light. Open the facing page on which the doctor stands alone, and the reverse of the flap shows the examination. Fun verges on foolish here, although the clean look of the stiff crayon drawings and the level of information are appropriate for the intended audience. Usable, but not as substantial as similar books by Anne Rockwell and Fred Rogers. (Note: prices on the author's *A Trip to the Dentist*, reviewed in the February issue, are the same). ZS

MacLachlan, Patricia. *The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt*. Harper, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-06-024117-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-024114-4. Library ed. \$11.89; Trade ed. \$11.70. Reviewed from galleys.

R* Gr. 4-7. Minna is eleven, her beloved brother a year younger; their father is a psychologist, their mother a writer, contentedly disorganized. A devoted member of a string quartet, Minna produces excellent tone on her cello, but has not yet achieved a vibrato. Few writers could do what MacLachlan does: she makes Minna's quest pulse with humor and suspense enough to attract readers who do not share Minna's passion for Mozart, or her devotion to practice sessions for a quartet competition. Smoothly blended into this theme are Minna's concerns about the peculiarities of her parents (especially as they compare to the very proper parents of Lucas, the viola player she loves) and developing tolerance of her own shortcomings. The intellectual and musical atmosphere are not gauged for popular appeal, but the author's style and humor, her lively dialogue, and her wonderfully vivid characters should attract and hold even those readers who have never before considered writing imaginary letters, as Minna does to her hero, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. "Dear WA Mozart," one letter begins, "You probably don't know me . . ." ZS

D.V. Parent-child relations

Mahy, Margaret. *Memory*. Margaret K. McElderry, 1988. ISBN 0-689-50446-2. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 8-12. On the fifth anniversary of his sister Janine's death from a fall, drunken nineteen-year-old Jonny Dart, "swollen with apparitions," is wandering the streets of the city. He meets a bedraggled but charming old woman named Sophie, who seems to mistake him for someone else ("It's lovely to have you here. There's no one quite like one of your own, is there!") and takes him to her home, a decrepit building with an enormous purple water tap affixed to the front, courtesy of Sophie's late husband, a plumber. The house is filled with junk and cats and memories—all belonging and carefully placed, but in the wrong places: cheese in the soap dish, soap in the sugar bowl, "a crazy stumbling contraption made up of strange things fitted together." Almost despite himself, Jonny moves in, helping Sophie to shop and bathe, teasing her about mistaking him for an old beau; sorting

through her memories and, in the process, making peace with some of his own. While occasionally thematically overstated and psychologically obvious, this is strong, direct storytelling, told from Jonny's point of view: perceptive but not pompous, with an edge of self-mockery that adds a poignant note to the narrative. Sophie's confusion (revealed to be Alzheimer's disease) is skillfully portrayed, containing its own wit and dignity and "longing to be busy and useful" that becomes clear and moving to Jonny and readers as the story progresses to a warming conclusion. RS

D.V. Older-younger generations; Service to others

Marrin, Albert. *The War for Independence: The Story of the American Revolution*. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31390-X. illus. with photographs. \$15.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 7-*. A spirited and thoughtful account of the American Revolution (next to Vietnam, the country's longest war) bridges the period between the years described in two earlier books by Marrin, *Struggle for a Continent: The French and Indian Wars* and *1812: The War Nobody Won*. Profusely illustrated by prints, paintings, and maps, the text is notable both for its style and its depth. There are many books about the War for Independence; this one links the events to the people who effected (and were affected by) them, so that motivation and causation are smoothly incorporated to heighten narrative impact and to increase readers' understanding—rather than stuff them with names and dates. A sizeable bibliography is provided. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.

Marshall, James. *Fox on the Job*; written and illus. by James Marshall. Dial, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-0351-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-0350-3. 48p. (Dial Easy-to-Read). Library ed. \$9.89; Trade ed. \$9.95.

- R *Gr. 1-3*. In this addition to a justifiably popular easy-to-read series about Fox and his friends, Fox wrecks his bike showing off for some girls. The next four episodes find him trying to earn money by becoming a shoe salesman (he insults the customers), a carnival hawker (he's scared of the haunted house), a pizza delivery person (he manages to disband a party with a box of mice intended for the veterinarian), and a sleeper in a mattress display window (success at last). The words are easy, the stories funny, the watercolor cartoons absurdly suited to Fox's antics, which are calculated (correctly) to appeal to youngsters who need all the humor they can get for the serious business of decoding. BH

C.U. Reading, beginning

D.V. Initiative

McCaughrean, Geraldine. *A Little Lower Than the Angels*. Oxford, 1987. ISBN 0-19-271561-5. 133p. \$13.95.

- R *Gr. 6-8*. In a first novel from an experienced adapter and editor, McCaughrean writes a lively and informative tale of medieval England, in those days when the traveling troupes of performers of Mystery and Morality plays offered resented competition for established celebrations in towns and villages. The story concerns an apprentice, Gabriel, who is so cruelly treated that he runs away to join a band of players and becomes the focus of a belief in miracle healing. The

plot has color and pace, the characters and dialogue are handled deftly, and the historical details are smoothly incorporated. The structure gives strong form to the informational aspect of a novel that marks an impressive debut. ZS

C.U. Drama—study and teaching

McHugh, Elisabet. *Beethoven's Cat*; illus. by Anita Riggio. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31364-0. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 5-7. Cream for cat lovers, this is narrated by Wiggie, one of several pets in the Carter family. In the process of researching his dissertation on Beethoven, Mr. Carter has discovered that the great musician had a cat named Ludwig which had a remarkable resemblance to Wiggie. Wiggie becomes possessed with the notion that he's Ludwig's reincarnation, assumes strange behavior, and begins to lose his hearing as well as his appetite. It takes an animal psychiatrist to convince him, with the aid of a cartoonist's manual, that the resemblance is exaggerated. This is so convincingly detailed that one expects it to become a time fantasy, with Wiggie somehow accomplishing something Beethoven seems to be urging him to do. It's a bit anticlimactic—and attenuated—when the whole thing turns out to be a case of feline delusion, but it's entertaining nonetheless, with the animal characters clearly imagined. BH

McMillan, Bruce. *Dry or Wet?* written and illus. with photographs by Bruce McMillan. Lothrop, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07101-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07100-7. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 2-5 yrs. Concept picture books don't come much simpler than this one—facing before/after photographs illustrating “dry” and “wet”—but as is usual for him, McMillan (*Here a Chick, There a Chick; Counting Wildflowers*) demonstrates the concept with clarity, humor, and occasional wit. There's an exuberant splash into the swimming pool, the gleeful hosing down of an (extremely patient) dalmatian, a red umbrella raised in defense against the onslaught of the garden spray. Children are pictured in all the photographs; whether in the bathroom with the Anno/Escher-like wallpaper or in the gloriously summery backyard, everybody looks to be having a terrific time. RS

D.V. Environmental concepts

Mills, Claudia. *Cally's Enterprises*. Macmillan, 1988. ISBN 0-02-767100-3. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 4-6. Cally is in sixth grade at a private school, a conforming and compliant child who goes along with the various after-school activities her parents have chosen and with their “help” in doing homework (choosing a theme topic, editing and typing it, helping with research and illustration). Two catalysts come into Cally's life: one is Chuck, a breezy take-charge boy who enlists Cally's help in the projects he's launched to earn vacation money; and the other is the substitute teacher, Mr. Feinberg, who rejects all class papers (Cally gets her first “D”) that show traces of parental help and convinces the class that he wants its members to think for themselves. Thus Cally comes to the point of telling her mother calmly that she really doesn't want to continue gymnastics and ballet, and that from now on she wants to be, within reasonable limits, self-directed. It's nice to have a book about the desire for independence, so typical a development of the young teen years, that is achieved without rancor or rebellion, and that also has good structure,

sturdy characterization and a smooth blending of serious issues and humorous incidents. ZS

D.V. Boy-girl relations; Self-confidence; Teacher-pupil relations

Moore, Elaine. *Grandma's Promise*; illus. by Elise Primavera. Lothrop, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-06741-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-06740-9. 28p. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 5-7 yrs. Kim has grown some since her appearance in *Grandma's House* (reviewed in the April, 1985, issue), but the warm relationship she shared there with her grandmother during a summer visit permeates her winter visit here. There's no plot *per se*, but there's a storm soon after Kim arrives, so she and Grandma have a mini-adventure without electricity for several days. They pack pine cones with peanut butter and cornmeal for the birds, go ice skating, and snuggle into a bed roll beside the wood stove. This is a rural idyll enhanced by watercolor landscapes and cozy interior scenes. The dominant blues and grays contrast vividly with the greens and tans of the last book—in fact the companion volumes serve as a kind of child's dream of country living and grandparental loving that holds the promise of permanent welcome. BH

D.V. Grandparent-child relations

Morrison, Lillian, comp. *Rhythm Road: Poems to Move To*. Lothrop, 1988. ISBN 0-688-07098-1. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-10. This anthology of nearly a hundred poems is imaginatively organized into ten sections related to the movements of dancing, riding, water, music, animals, entertainment, sports, work, technology, and mental activity. None of the poems is inaccessible, although there is a considerable difference in levels between a Ruth Krauss poem such as "Duet" and William Carlos Williams' "Illegitimate Things." May Swenson crops up frequently, as does E. E. Cummings. It's a lively collection, with lots of clamorous verse (Poe's "Bells," of course, and Southey's "Cataract of Lodore"), as well as an abundance of concrete poetry which occasionally becomes gimmicky. On the whole, however, there's tonal balance, with a combination of the traditional and the unusual. BH

Myers, Walter Dean. *Fallen Angels*. Scholastic, 1988. ISBN 0-590-40942-5. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 8-. Black, seventeen, perceptive and sensitive, Richie (the narrator) has enlisted and been sent to Vietnam; in telling the story of his year of active service, Richie is candid about the horror of killing and the fear of being killed, the fear and bravery and confusion and tragedy of the war. This trenchant novel is about a particular war, but it is an indictment of all war; Myers uses the language of soldiers and he identifies with their concerns. A tough book, a vivid story. ZS

C.U. History—U.S.

Nixon, Joan Lowery. *Caught in the Act*. Bantam, 1988. ISBN 0-553-05443-0. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 5-7. Second in the "Orphan Train" quartet, a series based on the work of the Children's Aid Society which sent orphans by train to new homes in the West in the years 1854-1929, this volume focuses on eleven-year-old Mike, whose

siblings are in other homes and who is taken in by a German immigrant family, the Friedrichs. Mr. Friedrich is a harsh, hostile man who knows that Mike had once picked a man's pocket in New York and is determined to teach the boy, through hard work, honesty as well as responsibility. The spoiled only son of the family vengefully accuses Mike of several transgressions and is always believed, although Mike is innocent. The plot is attenuated, a situation stretched into a story and given some suspense by Mike's suspicion, aroused by overheard conversation, that Friedrich has committed a serious crime and is in hiding (he isn't) and by Mike's need to change his home (he does). Period details are adequately handled; none of the characters or events of the story are historically based beyond the fact of the agency's work. The writing style is pedestrian and the characters seem overdrawn. ZS

Noonan, Michael. *McKenzie's Boots*. Orchard/Watts, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08348-9; Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05748-8. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 7-10.* Although he was not yet sixteen, Rod Murray was accepted into the Australian Army; his motives were both patriotic and self-protective, for he needed desperately to get away from an alcoholic mother and he knew—sadly—that the girl he adored didn't care for him. Noonan, if a bit wordy, is effective in drawing a picture of a soldier who is gentle and compassionate. Awarded a medal for his part in capturing a Japanese prisoner, Rod has secretly been sympathetic toward his captive (they had met as butterfly hunters) but is killed soon after in another encounter with the Japanese. This doesn't glorify war, and it makes a strong assertion about true heroes on both sides of a conflict. Noonan writes vividly in a story that has a stripped, strong plot with a nice fillip at the ending and with solidly established characterization. ZS

D.V. Courage

Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *Babies!* Holiday House, 1988. ISBN 0-8234-0685-7. illus. with photographs. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *4-7 yrs.* Illustrated with lots of informative color photographs of beautiful babies, this is an easy to read guide for younger children to the stages of infant development. Patent combines factual information ("Young babies are more interested in looking at patterns than in seeing solid colors") reassurance ("It may alarm you when the tiny body jerks with a hiccup but it doesn't bother the baby") and practical advice ("You have to be sure nothing dangerous can be reached from anywhere on the floor") in a smooth and simple text that will give older children a welcome sense of involvement with and responsibility for a new arrival. RS

D.V. Baby, adjustment to

Paterson, Katherine. *Park's Quest*. Lodestar, 1988. ISBN 0-525-67258-3. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 5-8.* Park, eleven, has no information about his father beyond the fact that he died in Vietnam; his overprotective mother refuses to talk about her husband. When, in response to his urging, Park is permitted to go for a fortnight to visit his father's family, he finds that he has an uncle and a grandfather, the

latter a stroke victim who cannot walk or talk. He also finds a brisk, caustic Asian child whose mother is married to Uncle Frank. A series of revelations about family affairs leads to new bonds, in a story that is honest, moving, and tender without being sentimental. Interpolated passages of Park's daydreams (Arthurian extravaganzas) add little to the furthering of plot or pace, although they give—repetitively—clues to Park's behavior and his concerns; save for this stylistic device, the writing is honey-smooth. ZS

D.V. Brothers-sisters; Death, adjustment to

Pilling, Ann. *The Big Pink*. Viking, 1988. ISBN 0-670-81156-4. 149p. \$11.95.

- R *Gr. 6-9.* British stories about all-girl boarding schools tend to follow the hockey/prefect/ivy formula. Not this, not by a long chalk. When Angela's missionary parents decide to leave her in England, she comes to The Moat, the school run by her martinet Aunt Pat. Angela's assigned to the big pink dormitory, but she is quickly, maliciously dubbed "The Big Pink" because she's overweight. This is a story of adjustment, peer relations, and the self-confidence that follows self-acceptance, and it deviates from formula by having strong characterization, logical development of plot, and a smooth writing style leavened by realistic dialogue and quiet humor. ZS

D.V. Age-mate relations; Aunt-niece relations; Self-confidence

Powzyk, Joyce. *Tracking Wild Chimpanzees*; written and illus. by Joyce Powzyk. Lothrop, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-06734-4; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-06733-6. 28p. Library ed. \$13.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 4-7.* The author/artist has illustrated a diary describing her trek through the Kibira Park forest in Burundi, Central Africa. There are six chapters detailing her arrival, observations of wildlife on the trail, and departure, all during the rainy season. Every page is partially or fully illustrated with watercolor paintings of flora and fauna referred to in the text. Although the volume's size and appearance suggest a picture book audience, this is in fact research material for older elementary- grade readers, with information that is personalized by experience and objectified by ecological themes. There's a map and a chart ("vertical distribution of primate species"), along with an animal index and glossary. BH

C.U. Nature study

Pringle, Laurence. *Rain of Troubles: The Science and Politics of Acid Rain*. Macmillan, 1988. ISBN 0-02-77537-0. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 5-9.* Pringle systematically defines and describes acid rain, with its effects on lakes, watersheds, flora, fauna, cities, and humans. In giving examples and experts' opinions, he walks the fine line between presenting the pressure of the problem and some perspective on it. Concluding chapters elaborate on the economics and politics militating for or against remedies suggested in a previous section. An up-to-date bibliography includes plenty of accessible articles for researching students. Indexed and to be illustrated with black-and-white photographs, drawings, and maps, this is thorough, scientific, and crystal clear. BH

C.U. Nature study

Pullman, Philip. *Shadow in the North*. Knopf, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-394-99453-1; Trade ed. ISBN 0-394-89453-7. Library ed. \$13.99; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R* Gr. 8-. In this sequel to *Ruby in the Smoke* (reviewed in the May, 1987 issue) Sally Lockhart, now twenty-two, has set herself up as a financial consultant, helping, among others, elderly Miss Walsh invest a small legacy. Anglo-Baltic, the company in which Miss Walsh invested her £3000, has collapsed under mysterious, and deadly, circumstances. Sally promises to investigate, walking fearlessly ("“You warned me about what, exactly? Let’s be clear about it, Mr. Bellman. What exactly must I stop doing, and what exactly will you do if I don’t?””) into a shadowy world, “more than a little devilish,” which includes such disparate elements as a master magician, a murder in Russia, a beautiful, doomed heiress, and a terrifying war machine reaped from all the technological cunning of the late nineteenth century. As he did in *Ruby in the Smoke*, Pullman weaves all this together in a way that makes moral as well as narrative sense, constantly shocking readers who have too-rosy expectations of what a neo-Victorian thriller should be. Pullman also excels at the anticlimactic climax (remember Sally casually tossing the ruby in the Thames): when Sally finally recovers the £3000, it is hardly a triumph, for her whole world has been destroyed to obtain it. RS

Roberts, Willo Davis. *Megan’s Island*. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31397-7. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R Gr. 5-7. Megan is ten, her brother Sandy a year younger; since their father died when Sandy was a baby, Mom has had a hard time earning a living, and has moved often in her search for a better job. Or so she says. It is only after a sudden night flight to Grandpa’s lakeside cottage that unfolding, threatening events bring out the fact that their mother has been on the run and has changed their names. The island refuge Megan and Sandy have found plays an important part in the dramatic conclusion of the story, which includes the foiling of a planned kidnapping. The plot is occasionally turgid, but that’s compensated for by the author’s fluid writing style, the excitement of the action, and the solidity of the characterization. ZS

Ryden, Hope. *Wild Animals of America ABC*; written and illus. with photographs by Hope Ryden. Dutton, 1988. ISBN 0-525-67245-1. 30p. \$12.95.

R 4-7 yrs. From alligator to zone-tailed hawk, large full-color photographs (one to a page) illustrate this alphabet of American animals. Some children may be surprised that “seal” is found under “H” (Harbor seal) and “crab” under “X” (Xanthid crab), but the photographs are notable in their placement of each animal within its environmental context, highlighting important characteristics or behavior: a beaver, for example, is shown dragging a stick through water; a lynx is neatly camouflaged in the tawny background foliage. Appended facts about the animals expand and explain the photos; it would have been nice had Ryden also provided information about where in the country each animal lives. RS

Selsam, Millicent E. *A First Look at Caterpillars*; by Millicent E. Selsam and Joyce Hunt; illus. by Harriett Springer. Walker, 1987. Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-6702-8; Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-6700-1. 32p. Library ed. \$11.85; Trade ed. \$10.95.

- R *Gr. 1-3.* Beginning with an emphasis on the different shapes of eggs, Selsam leads beginning readers through observations of caterpillar parts, variations in physical appearance, and the process of metamorphosis. With her customary adherence to scientific investigation, the author directs questions at the reader, who can figure out answers from the distinctively drawn, green and gray pictures on every page. Practical application comes with the suggestion to raise a caterpillar ("If it is a moth caterpillar it will spin a cocoon. If it is a butterfly caterpillar it will start to harden and change into a chrysalis"). A concluding identification chart summarizes common identification points to look for: hair, spines, pattern, body movement, horns, forked tails, silky tents. The index comprises a list of caterpillars featured in the book. BH
C.U. Science

Service, Pamela F. *The Reluctant God*. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31404-3. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- Ad *Gr. 6-9.* Service uses her own background as a student of archeology and a participant in digs to give color and authenticity to the details of a fantasy in which a prince of ancient Egypt appears in modern times and becomes the companion of an archeologist's daughter. Part of the book is told as historical fiction, as Ameni, whose twin brother will become Pharaoh, copes with (or escapes) responsibility as a royal prince. When the chapters shift to the present, he and Lorna go from Egypt to London to retrieve a sacred relic, and these chapters are less convincing, as the descriptions of Ameni's adjustment often include telescoped contrivance. On the whole, a good read, though. ZS

Siebert, Diane. *Mojave*; illus. by Wendell Minor. Crowell, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-690-04569-7; Trade ed. ISBN 0-690-04567-0. Library ed. \$13.89; Trade ed. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- M *Gr. 1-3.* Stylized paintings of the desert and its creatures illustrate a first-person poem in the voice of the Mojave, who, it appears, speaks in rather pedantic couplets: "The beavertails; the hedgehogs stout;/ The jointed chollas reaching out;/ The barrel cacti, fat and round —/ All live upon my arid ground." Minor's paintings are beautifully colored, with some dramatic perspectives, but their composition is overly formal — not a prickly on a cactus, nor hair on a coyote seems out of place, belying the wind and harshness and wildness claimed (ineffectively) in the text. RS

D.V. Environmental concepts

Silverstein, Alvin. *Wonders of Speech*; by Alvin and Virginia Silverstein. Morrow, 1988. ISBN 0-688-06534-1. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 7-.* Clear writing, good organization of material, broad coverage, and the inclusion of recent research all contribute to an exemplary informational book. The authors discuss the ways in which sound is produced in the human being, the functioning of the brain in storing and sorting bits of the intricate communications network, the learning of language, speech disabilities, artificial languages, and other aspects of speech. Books that are entitled "The Wonders of. . ." don't always seem wonderful; here it is moot which is the more wonderful, the ability of people

to speak or the extent to which scientists have discovered the complexities of how the brain operates to produce speech and the memory on which it depends. ZS

C.U. Communications (unit); Science

Simon, Seymour. *Galaxies*. Morrow, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-06185-0; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-06184-2. 28p. illus. with photographs. Library ed. \$12.88; Trade ed. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 2-4.* Part of an astronomy series that already includes books on the sun, stars, and four planets, this meets the challenge of conveying immensity by analogy. In describing the more than three hundred billion stars that make up the Andromeda galaxy, for instance, Simon says, "If you were to count one star per second nonstop, it would take you more than nine thousand years to count the stars in that galaxy." The measurement of light-years gets similar treatment, with reference to time as well as distance: "The light from the Andromeda spiral that we see today first started on its journey more than two million years ago, when our ancestors lived in caves." Dramatic photographs, computer-colored against black backgrounds, show the shapes of spiral, elliptical, barred spiral, and irregular galaxies. Although a concluding statement asserts that the universe is without any boundary, the map that "plots the locations of one million galaxies" unfortunately undercuts this idea with a round frame. Outside of such nitpicking, this is a solid addition to children's understanding of scientific phenomena. BH

C.U. Science

Sleator, William. *The Duplicate*. Dutton, 1988. ISBN 0-525-44390-8. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 7-9.* "It looks like a combination postage scale and video camera," says the sixteen-year-old narrator, David, in describing the object labelled *Spee-Dee-Dupe* that he's found on the beach. The object proves, indeed, to be a duplicating machine—but only of living things. That is how David produces a clone; the clone has all David's memories and claims *he* is the original David. Who joins the family for dinner? Who appears at school? Who courts the charming Angela, and who tells about what they said and did so that the clone won't make a mistake? Above all, what do the two Davids do when a third turns up, and how do they handle a growing animosity? There are some points in the story when the roles of the clones (referred to as Duplicates A and B) become congested to the detriment of the book's pace, but fantasy fans will doubtless find the concept fresh enough and eerie enough to compensate for this, and Sleator is, as always, economical in casting and structuring his story. ZS

Snyder, Dianne, ad. *The Boy of the Three-Year Nap*; illus. by Allen Say. Houghton, 1988. ISBN 0-395-44090-4. 32p. \$14.95.

- R * *5-7 yrs.* A trickster gets tricked in this clever folktale from Japan, with delicately modulated illustrations that reflect stylistic and narrative techniques of Japanese painting. Taro is a lazy boy who schemes to become the son-in-law of a rich merchant by disguising himself as an ujigami and ordering the merchant to marry off his daughter to "that fine lad who lives on your street" (Taro). Taro's mother in turn tricks Taro into accepting a job as the merchant's storehouse manager. "And as it turned out, the marriage is a happy one. . . . If he is not the busiest man in town, neither is he the laziest." The pictures as well as the words

use an understated irony to suggest the duplicity and gullibility on display here. In fact, several illustrations are witty parodies of well-known *ukiyo-e* woodcuts. Contrasts of color and image are vivid but never exaggerated. The humor of characterization does not detract from the aesthetic appeal of landscape and domestic scenes. Lines are spare and meticulous, with each illustration framed in a black brush-stroked rectangle. A satisfying picture book in every respect. BH

D.V. Laziness, overcoming

Sobol, Donald J. *Encyclopedia Brown and the Case of the Treasure Hunt*; illus. by Gail Owens. Morrow, 1988. ISBN 0-688-06955-X. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-7. You'd think that by now criminals would know to stay away from Idaville, where "every grown-up or child who broke the law got caught." Encyclopedia Brown is the reason, of course, "better than a library for getting answers. He was never closed." There are ten mysteries for readers to solve here, a few depending on special knowledge (that a tennis pro has one forearm bigger than the other, for example) but most relatively easily worked out through patience and careful reading. (And, of course, Encyclopedia's ingenious solutions are found at the back of the book.) Boys who won't read anything else love this series: for its problem-solving activity, recurring characters like Bugs Meany, and its dumb jokes—"Relax," Encyclopedia said gently. "I've handled Bugs before. His breath is worse than his bite." RS

Solomon, Chuck. *Our Little League*; illus. with photographs by Chuck Solomon. Crown, 1988. ISBN 0-517-56798-9. \$10.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. K-2. Although the term "Little League" is not used in the text, its use in the title may lead readers (or readers-aloud) to wonder about the deviations from usual Little League procedures; here, for example, the game is five rather than six innings, and the pitching is done by the coach, an adult; these deviations are acceptable in the more flexible program for the youngest members. The color photographs are bright and clear, if repetitive; the text describes practice and a division game, with an emphasis on sportsmanship, team effort, and enjoyment in participation. ZS

Solotareff, Gregoire. *The Ogre and the Frog King*; written and illus. by Gregoire Solotareff. Greenwillow, 1988. Library ed. ISBN 0-688-07079-5; Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-07078-7. 30p. Library ed. \$11.88; Trade ed. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

R 3-5 yrs. Both text and pictures here dramatize the elements that grab a young listener's attention. The cover itself shows the ogre with long sharp teeth, knife, and fork upraised over a defenseless frog. However, by mid-book, the frog has jumped through the window and landed on the sleeping ogre's nose, where it looks enormous. This trick of perspective frightens the ogre, who promises to forego tasty little animals and goes on a diet of mushrooms. On discovering the frog's true size from some taunting birds, the ogre is shamed into leaving the forest forever. The hurly-burly lines and colors are uproarious. The ogre is a red-bearded, green-eyed, hairy monster that fills every page of his appearance until the small animals replace him with a triumphant dance on the last double-page spread. Satisfying and effective for story hours. BH

C.U. Storytelling

Spirin, Gennady, illus. *The Enchanter's Spell: Five Famous Tales*; comp. and illus. by Gennady Spirin. Dial, 1988. ISBN 0-8037-0320-1. 80p. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 4-6.* A collection of fairy tales by Andersen, Cervantes, Hoffman, Macdonald, and Pushkin is illustrated with wonderfully detailed and textured paintings by a noted Soviet artist. Spirin's work is in the medieval tradition, remarkable for its play of light and shadow and the fidelity of costume detail; within the boundaries of his style, however, there is a varied response to the classic tales he is illustrating, so that the pictures for "The Emperor's New Clothes" are comic, while those for George MacDonald's "Little Daylight" are appropriately eerie. The palette is rich but subdued, the page layout and book design impressive. ZS

Steiner, Barbara. *Tessa*. Morrow, 1988. ISBN 0-688-07232-1. \$11.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- Ad *Gr. 7-9.* In a story set in rural Arkansas in 1946, fourteen-year-old Tessa shares her father's interest in amateur archeology rather than her mother's social ambitions and longing for town life. When Mama decides to leave her husband, Tessa Mae is determined to spend the summer working outdoors with her father, Roy Glen. Having a handsome college student on the dig makes the summer even more pleasant. Still, by its end she has decided that "it wouldn't be right for her" to live so casual a life. (Steiner doesn't make this decision a logical one). The ambivalence is a facet of adolescent life with which most readers can identify, and the family schism is convincing, but the story is weakened by the awkward and inconsistent use of dialect and by the introduction of sub-plots that are tangential and that slow the pace of the book. ZS

D.V. Parent-child relations

Switzer, Ellen. *Greek Myths: Gods, Heroes and Monsters: Their Sources, Their Stories and Their Meanings*; illus. with photographs by Costas. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31253-9. \$16.95. Reviewed from galleys.

- R *Gr. 7-12.* Divided into creation myths, a description of the gods, humans' beginnings, heroes and heroines, popular legends, and the Trojan War and its aftermath, this is more a folkloristic resource than a lyrical retelling. Preceding each story is a brief note discussing its origins, both literary and oral, with historical context or archeological descriptions wherever pertinent. This is an ambitious project, not only for its scope but also for its attempt to relate the tales as they are known in Greece today, with variants favored by different sections of the country and with photographs of the locations. The canon is so large and complex that occasionally the text takes on the tone of a catalogue, and there are a few shortcuts: "the beautiful Helen (who caused all the trouble)" is a description that considerably diminishes the concept of fate described elsewhere; there is also no mention of Achilles heel ("As had been prophesied, Achilles was killed shortly after he defeated Hector, but the war went on relentlessly, with casualties on both sides increasing"). On the whole, however, this draws together and links an extraordinary amount of material with vivid immediacy, an important contribution to the cultural literacy of today's young people, who will be amazed and intrigued at the outrageous behavior of gods and humans alike. BH

Tessendorf, K.C. *Barnstormers and Daredevils*. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31346-2. illus. and with photographs. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 5-7. Tessendorf's account of the daring pilots, parachutists, and stuntmen—and women—in the first decades of this century is detailed, voluble, informative, repetitive in its examples, gushy in its style, and weakened by the citing of dialogue that bears no attributions. Nevertheless, the appeal of the subject with its inherent drama and danger is such that the book will undoubtedly attract readers, especially those who are flight history buffs. The text includes anecdotes about some famous barnstormers, including Charles Lindbergh. A brief bibliography is provided. ZS

Tompert, Ann. *The Greatest Showman on Earth: A Biography of P.T. Barnum*. Dillon, 1987. ISBN 0-87518-370-0. 117p. illus. with photographs. (People in Focus). \$11.95.

Ad Gr. 4-7. P.T. Barnum was a complicated mix of intelligence and humbug. Tompert has assembled the facts of his life competently and attempted a perspective, though some aspects of Barnum's personality and times dangle problematically. After a disclaimer that "it was common practice for showmen to exhibit curiosities in display rooms," the text acceptingly lumps deformed animals, misshapen humans, and odd mechanical displays together in the service of explaining Barnum's fortunes. The latter varied wildly from success to failure, which Tompert attributes to Barnum's inability to trust the right people. She also makes an effort to address his neglect of family through total submersion in work and discusses his boundless energy and optimism in the face of many disasters. On the other hand, some of his contributions seem overrated: "Jenny Lind's tour marked the beginning of real music in the United States." Barnum's pioneer work in advertising, however, is undeniable and well described here. With black-and-white photographs and prints, index, and bibliography. BH

Voigt, Cynthia. *Tree by Leaf*. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31403-5. \$13.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 5-7. World War I has just ended, and Clothilde (twelve) is laden with much of the housework in addition to her worries about her parents and her older brother, and her fear that the Maine peninsula on which they live and which is legally hers, will be sold by her parents. The family is poor, and Mother seems unable to accept responsibility; Father, facially disfigured during a battle, hides in the boathouse. Nate, Clothilde's brother, has run off to live with the wealthy paternal grandfather who had thrown them out of his home when Father enlisted. The book is a mixture of strength and weakness; the setting, characters, and situation are convincingly presented, while the pace of the story and the plot development are slow and not always smooth, especially the incorporation of episodes in which the protagonist hears a "Voice" with whom she conducts long conversations. ZS

D.V. Father-daughter relations

Walker, Alice. *To Hell With Dying*; illus. by Catherine Deeter. Harcourt, 1988. ISBN 0-15-289075-0. \$14.95. Reviewed from galleys.

M Gr. 2-5. "Mr. Sweet had been ambitious as a boy, wanted to be a doctor or lawyer or sailor, only to find that black men fare better if they are not," so he

fishes and drinks and plays old blues songs on his guitar, and, whenever he feels close to death, has the children called to bring him back: "to hell with dying, man," says the heroine's father, "These children want Mr. Sweet!" There is a story in here that tells of strong love and bonds within a small black community, but it is rendered from an adult perspective ("His ability to be drunk and sober at the same time made him an ideal playmate, for he was as weak as we were and we could usually best him in wrestling, all the while keeping a fairly coherent conversation going") and children may be bemused, to no effect, at Mr. Sweet's dyings and resurrections. The illustrations are brightly colored, but combine realistic and sentimental techniques into a jarring flamboyance. A few of the pictures are portraits of Miss Walker; these, like most of the figure drawing, are stiff and reverential, which, along with the overly-large and static layout, makes the book seem more of a pretentious conceit for adults than a story for children. RS

D.V. Older-younger generations

Wallace, Barbara Brooks. *The Interesting Thing that Happened at Perfect Acres, Inc.*; illus. by Blanche Sims. Atheneum, 1988. ISBN 0-689-31354-3. \$12.95. Reviewed from galleys.

Ad Gr. 4-6. Perfect Acres, Inc., a housing development presided over by perfectly nasty Mr. Snoot, has perfectly rectangular houses, perfectly boring tenants, and, feels heroine Perfecta, perfectly dreadful rules, such as POOBFTASF ("Playing-outside-only-between-five-thirty-and-six-fifteen") and ROOBABS ("Reading-outside-only-books-approved-by-Snoot"). There's one house in the neighborhood, a lovely old one, that Snoot does not control—and wants—and it is there that Perfecta begins a magical quest with new-found friend Puck. What the quest is for, they're not sure, knowing only that there are three trials to undergo, each one to take them one step closer to solving the mystery of the old house. Thematically, this sets up nasty, convention-bound adults (personified in Snoot) against the freewheeling imagination of childhood (Puck and Perfecta) to a surprisingly moving ending, but it is burdened by an excessively whimsical tone and a surfeit of magical persons and devices. RS

D.V. Imaginative powers

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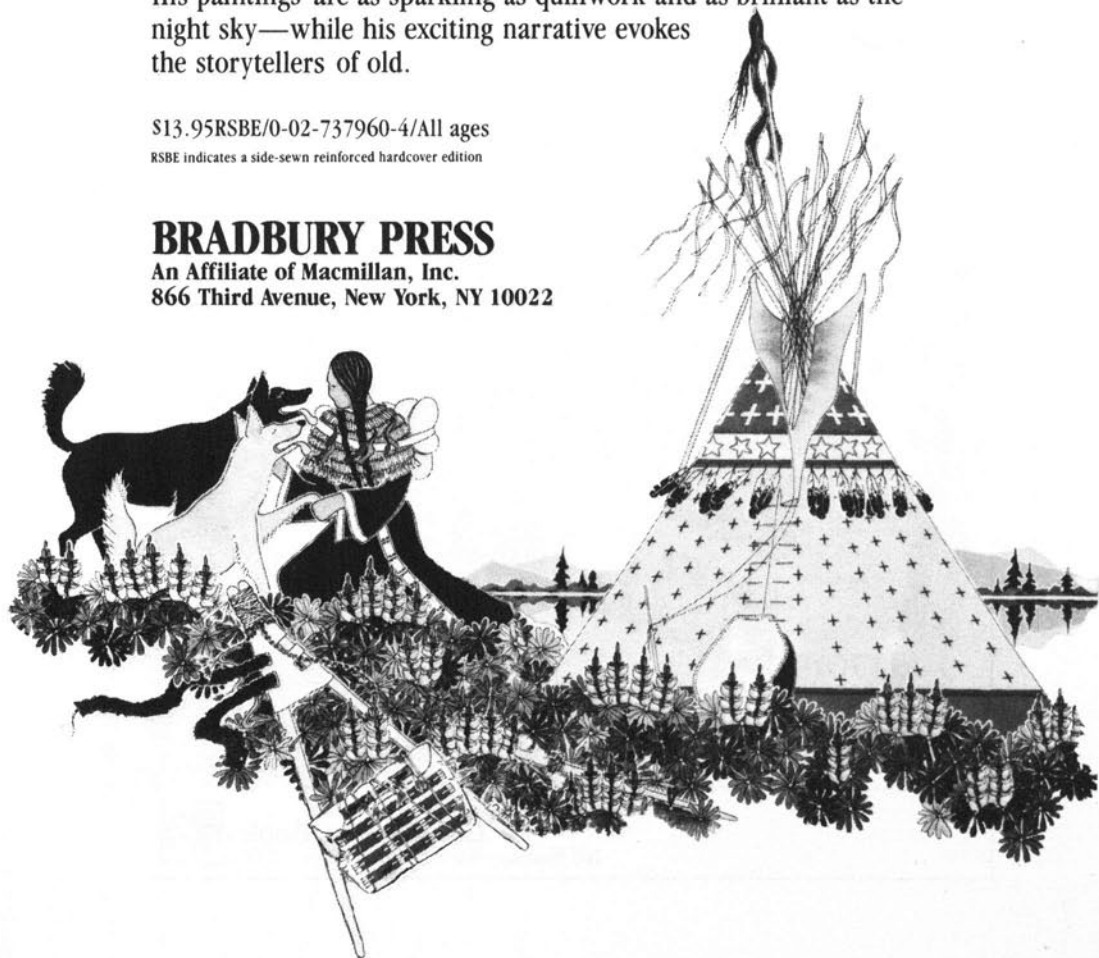
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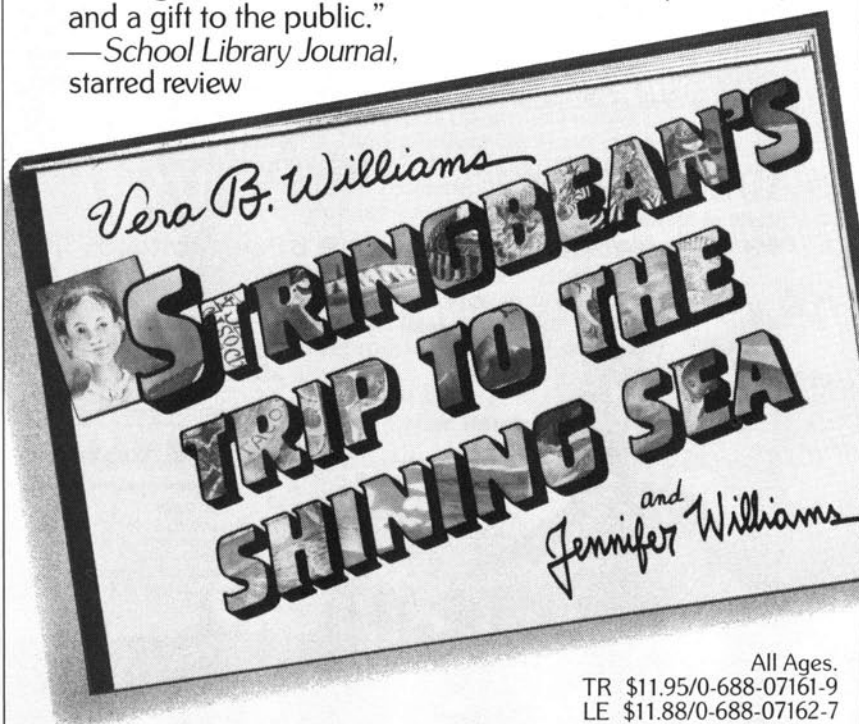
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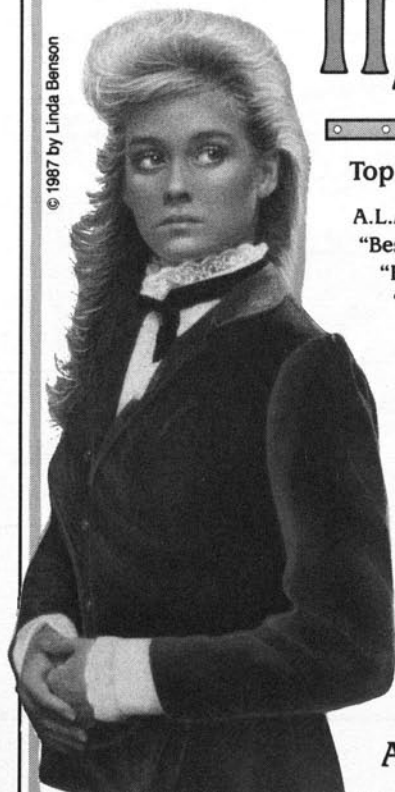
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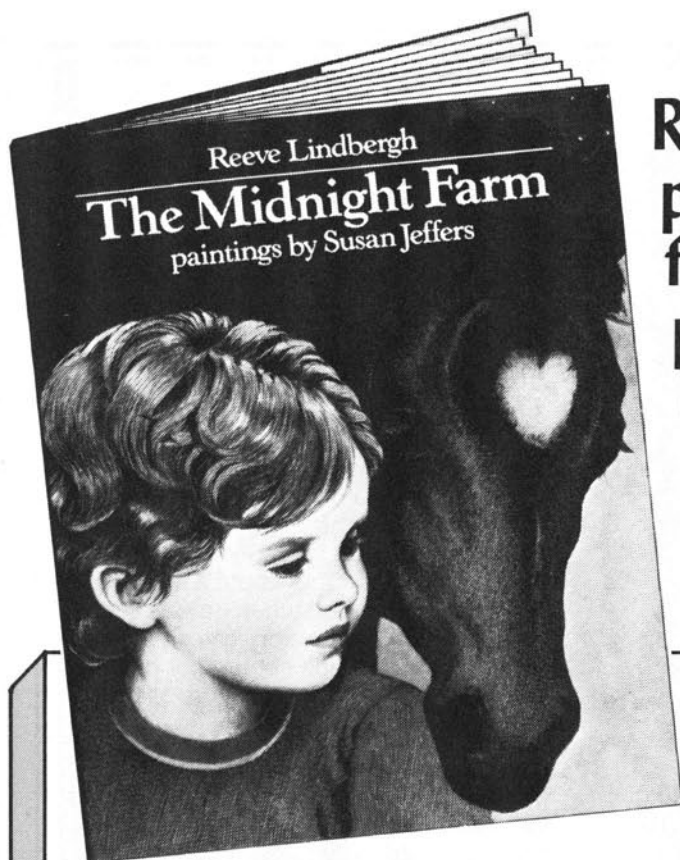
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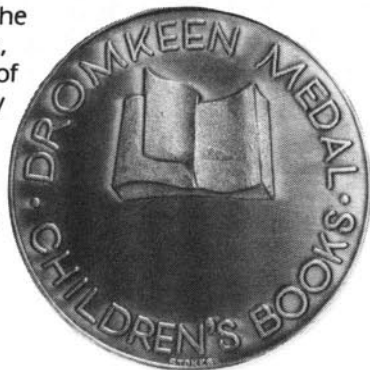
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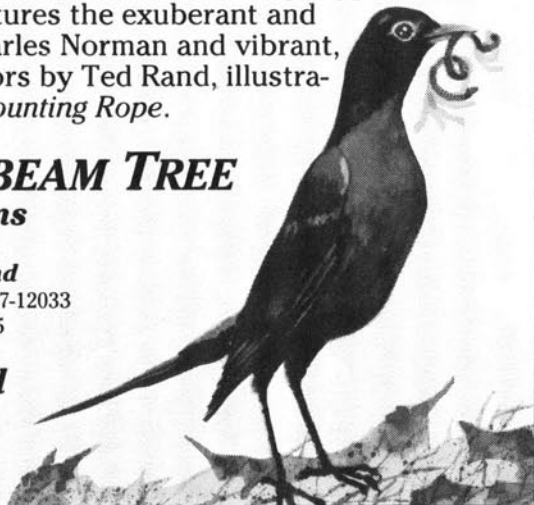
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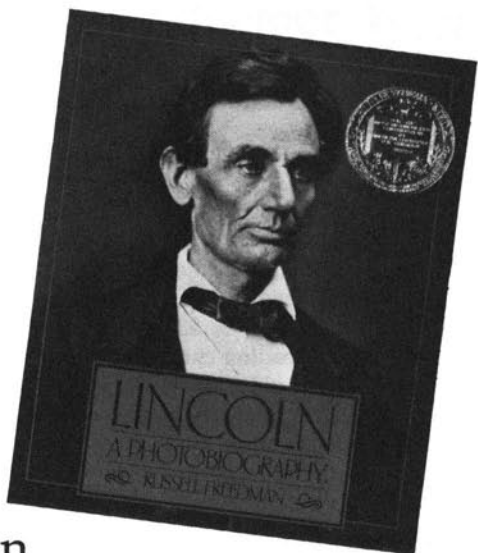
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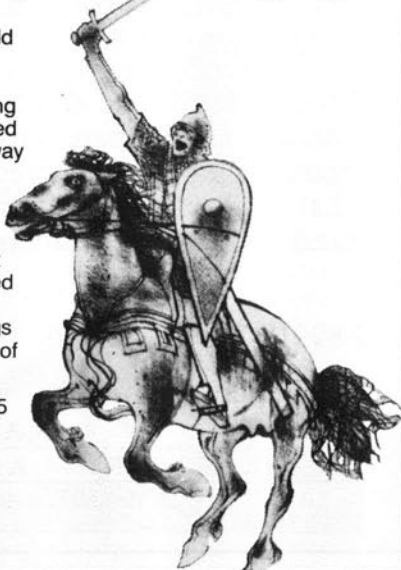




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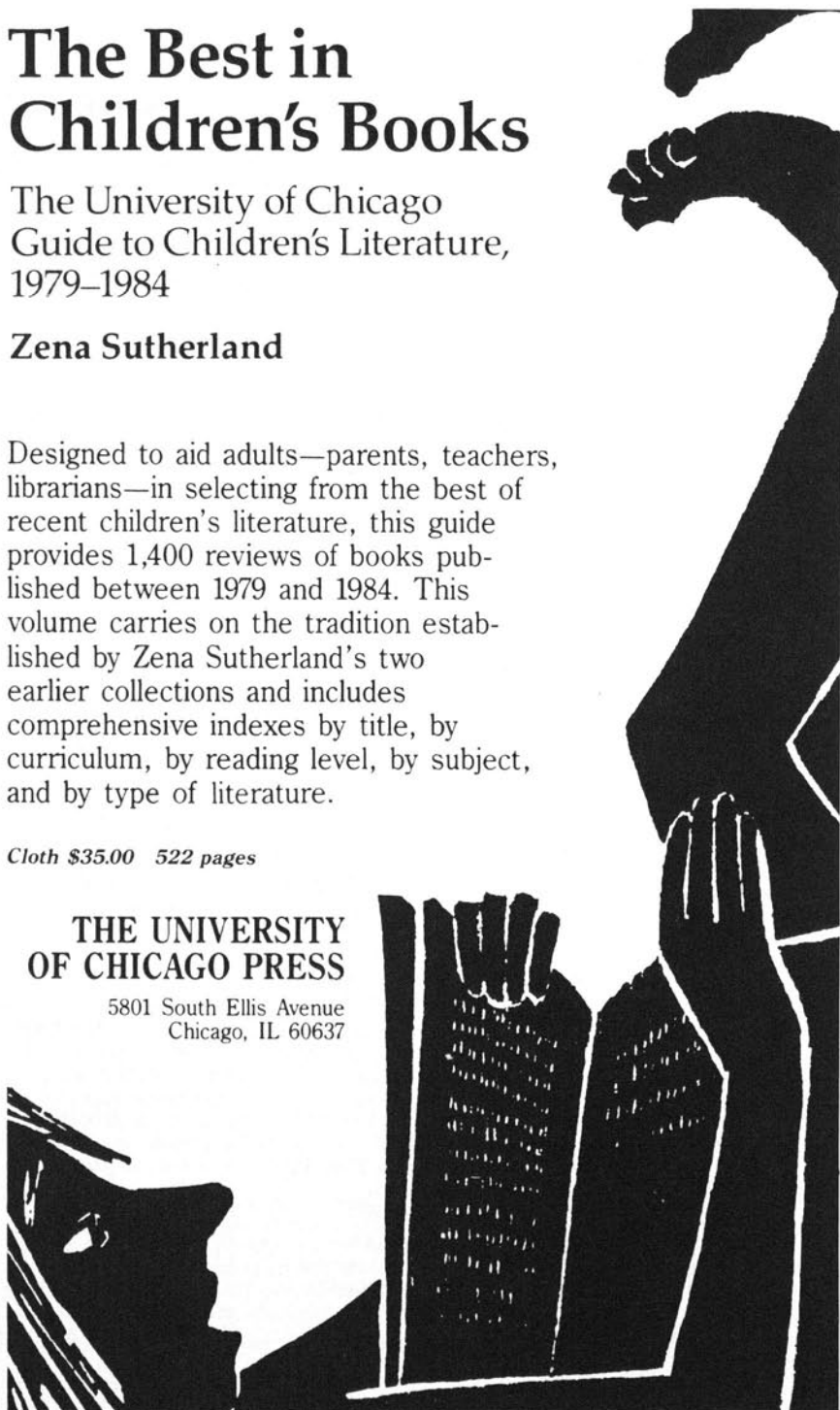
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AWARDS

The Newbery Medal was awarded to Russell Freedman for *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (Houghton/Clarion). Newbery Honor books were *After the Rain* by Norma Fox Mazer (Morrow) and *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen (Bradbury).

The Caldecott Medal was won by John Scheonherr for his illustrations of *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen (Philomel). The Caldecott Honor book was *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Lothrop), a folktale adapted and illustrated by John Steptoe.

The American publisher receiving the Batchelder Award for the most outstanding translation of a book originally published in a foreign language is Margaret K. McElderry for *If You Didn't Have Me* by Ulf Nilsson, illustrated by Eva Eriksson, and translated from the Swedish by Lone and George Blecher.

The Coretta Scott King Award will be presented by the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table to Mildred Taylor, author of *The Friendship* (Dial), and John Steptoe, illustrator of *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Lothrop). Honor books are *Tales of Uncle Remus* by Julius Lester, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney (Dial), and *An Enchanted Hair Tale* by Alexis De Veaux, illustrated by Cheryl Hanna (Harper).

The Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction will be given to Patricia Beatty for *Charley Skedaddle* (Morrow).

The Canadian Library Association's Best Book of the Year for Children is *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay* by Janet Lunn (Scribner). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award book is *Moonbeam on a Cat's Ear* by Marie-Louise Gay (Silver Burdett).

The Carnegie Medal book is *Granny Was A Buffer Girl* by Berlie Doherty (Orchard).

The Kate Greenaway Medal book is *Snow White in New York*, written and illustrated by Fiona French (Oxford University).

The Hans Christian Andersen Award goes to author Patricia Wrightson and to illustrator Robert Ingpen.

